WAIT, LADY!

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15¢ POCKET TIN

BOND STREET PIPE TOBACCO

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GHOST IN THE GULF

(Continued from Page 14)

over the tug for inshore-patrol duty and now it is fifteen days between the visits of the Navy or a patrol motorboat *which brings mail and supplies.* The ERA project on the key closed down last November and there are no more relief laborers to share the isolation with the Budlongs.

Imagine a new early-American-type *home in a $12,000-to-$18,000-bracket* residential development. Such is the rebuilt commandant's house in which the Budlongs live, served by electric light and refrigeration and by the most modern plumbing, though the only water on the Dry Tortugas is that caught in cisterns.

They have a radio-telephone on which they may talk to the mainland daily at fixed intervals. But the nearest human society, except twice a month, or when a rare yacht puts in, their nearest movie, drugstore, newspaper or restaurant is six hours away over a shallow and treacherous sea. Between January first and mid-February, 1942, just two yachts and no planes called at Fort Jefferson.

Before this is published, the Navy may have taken over the fort. The Navy or the Army always has in war, though each time the Dry Tortugas have defeated them, and their military value is more dubious than ever in this war.

Fort Jefferson was designed to command the gulf and was aimed primarily at Great Britain, but the invention of the rifled cannon made it useless before it could be finished. The *eight-foot-thick brick walls, impregnable to round* shot from smooth-bore naval guns, were worthless against rifled shells.

Simon Bernard was brought from France by Jefferson to build a chain of impregnable forts along the whole *coast of the young republic. Fortress* Monroe is the perfect Bernard fort. He was an aide-de-camp to Napoleon, the last officer the Emperor noted at his side at Waterloo. Bernard rejoined Napoleon after Elba, remained at his side until the end, then was recommended to Jefferson by Lafayette. After the accession of Louis Philippe, Bernard returned to France to become inspector general of engineers, aide-de-camp to the king, and minister of war in three cabinets, created a baron finally.

The first of Bernard's brick bastions to fall was Fort Pulaski at the mouth of the Savannah River, in 1862. The Union forces planted thirty-six rifled guns and mortars on Tybee Island and Federal gunboats maneuvered in to the rear of the fort. In two days they blasted it apart.

American Gibraltar

In General Gillmore's report on Charleston he said: "110,643 pounds of metal produced a breach in Fort Pulaski which caused the surrender of that permanent and well-constructed brick fortress in two days, while 122,-*000 pounds of metal failed to open the* bombproof of Fort Wagner, a sand work extemporized for the war."

Pulaski taught the South how to defend Sumter and other Bernard-designed forts. Any yielding substance which would slow down and finally stop heavy rifled shells, and which could be shoveled back into position, was vastly better than brick or granite walls. The shells plowed through these, the flying particles were murderous, and the walls, once breached, remained so.

But when Jefferson's walls first be*gan to rise in 1846 on Garden Key,* one of the Tortugas, it was to be an American Gibraltar. The Louisiana and Florida cessions had made the gulf an American sea, had uncorked the Mississippi to American trade. Through *the narrow Florida channel flowed nine* tenths of the gulf's shipping. If we did not fortify the keys, an enemy would. Spain was a few miles away in turbulent Cuba. Great Britain was near at hand in her West Indies, and the republic of Texas was flirting with the British. Jackson's victory over Wellington's veterans under Pakenham at New Orleans was only thirty years in the past. Jackson's rifles had slaughtered the musket-equipped British, but this revolutionary invention was not yet applied to naval cannon.

Fighting the Jungle

How could such a fort have commanded the gulf, one in two tourists asks. Its cannon could not carry more than two or three miles. Why shouldn't an enemy fleet simply by-pass it? Because, of course, as long as Jefferson stood there impregnable to naval attack, an American fleet could take *shelter under its guns and no alien fleet* would dare enter the gulf with our fleet on its flank.

In December, 1846, a second lieutenant of engineers not long out of West Point, Horatio G. Wright, *arrived at the Tortugas with two fellow* Yankees, Jeremiah Peabody and George Phillips. They found a cluster of eight tiny keys covered with mangrove and buttonwood thickets and inhabited by one lighthouse keeper. Garden Key, *site of the fort,* was barely three feet above sea level. There were no terns in December, but they came in countless numbers before summer.

While the master plan of coast-defense fortifications from Maine to the Mississippi's mouth was Bernard's, the design of Fort Jefferson was Montgomery Meigs', under the supervision of old Gen. Joe Totten, who has a fort on Long Island Sound named for him.

Wright, Peabody and Phillips laid out sites for frame barracks to house workmen and materials, while in New Hampshire lumber actually was being prefabricated for these buildings. They were to be up in sixty days, in theory, but it was a year before they were built. Five years passed and the fort was barely begun, ten years and the walls yet rose only a few feet above the harbor waters.

Contract slave labor did the heavier work, supplemented by Irish hands imported from New York. The slaves *were lazy, the Irish enervated by the* climate. An officer remarked that it took fourteen panting, sweating men to move a piano that would not have troubled three bullies in New York. The skilled labor had to be brought *from New York, and there was nothing* to attract it—not even high wages. All toiled ten hours a day, six days a week. On the seventh day they could fish or swim—or swim or fish. The granite came from Vermont, cement from New York, big yellow handmade brick and lumber from Pensacola—they came, that is, when ships could be found, for a Dry Tortugas charter was not attractive for many reasons.

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